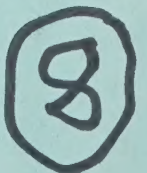
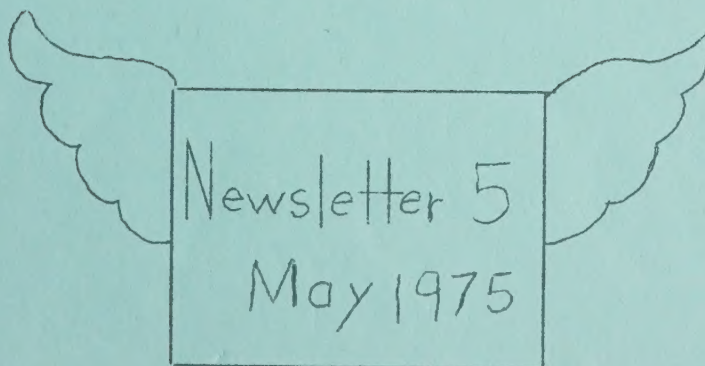
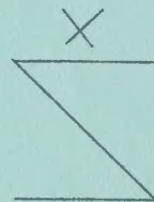
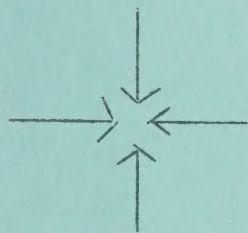


Mrs. Shirley McNaughton
Symbol Communication
Research Project O.C.C.C.
50 Rumsey Rd.
Onto, Ont.

Symbol Co-ordination Committee.



8

SYMBOL CO-ORDINATION COMMITTEE

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Treasurer	Ann Kennedy	Volunteer, Toronto
Secretary	Linda Schwindt	O.T., Kitchener
Editor	Barbara Rush	Teacher, Hamilton
Asst. Editor	Lois Valentic	Parent, Hamilton
Workshop Convenor	Penny Parnes	Speech Pathologist, Oshawa
Consultant	Oliver Mott	Linguist, Toronto

is to publish
The purpose of this newsletter/articles and news items concerning
the Bliss Symbol System which utilizes visual symbols as a
substitute to verbal communication for physically-handicapped
children without speech.

SUBSCRIPTIONS are \$3.00 each and may be obtained by completing
the form on page 3.

ARTICLES for the newsletter should be sent to:

Mrs. Barbara Rush, Editor
Symbol Co-ordination Committee
c/o 64 Magnolia Drive
Hamilton, Ontario, L9C 5T2

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NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

Here we are with the last issue in our first series. The most important thing you have to do, if you wish to continue receiving this Newsletter, is to complete and mail the subscription renewal form on page 3 by June 30th. The next series of 4 volumes will cover the period September 1975 to August 1976. We have had to raise the price to \$3.00 per subscription and hope that you feel you are receiving your money's worth. If no-one renews, we'll get the message !

Actually, what we would really like is to receive your comments - positive and critical. It is YOUR newsletter but we do not know what you want unless you let us know. Comments on make-up, size, content, etc., would be so very welcome.

... ..

We must draw your attention to the fact that the symbols included in the articles which follow (and all subsequent newsletters) are exact reproductions of items submitted. The Ontario Crippled Children's Centre Symbol Programme Evaluation Study is attempting to standardize symbols. Newly created symbols that have not been approved by the Evakuation Study will be asterisked (*). Anyone creating new symbols for inclusion on a permanent display is asked to submit the suggestions to Shirley McNaughton, c/o Ontario Crippled Children's Centre Evaluation Study, 350 Rumsey Road, Toronto, Ont., to ensure the new symbols are in keeping with the Bliss System. We appreciate all efforts to standardize symbols in order that children around the world may communicate with each other.

... ..

Shirley McNaughton's book "Symbol Secrets" is now available at a price of \$6.00. It is a primary-level story written in words and symbols. To obtain a copy, please write to:

Mrs. Ann Kennedy
Information Officer
Symbol Communication Research Project
Ontario Crippled Children's Centre
350 Rumsey Road
Toronto, Ontario
.....

The C.B.C. has not yet confirmed a date for the showing of "Mr. Symbol Man." Our best advice is to check your local listings carefully during the remainder of May and June.

... ..

The deadline date for the receipt of articles for the next newsletter is September 15, 1975. However, operations are pretty much closed down during July and August, and we would appreciate hearing from you by the end of July. Please write - the continuance of the newsletter depends on YOU.

Barbara Rush - Editor

Please detach along dotted line and mail by June 30, 1975

SUBSCRIPTION RENEWAL FORM

To: Mrs. Ann Kennedy
Treasurer, Symbol Co-ordination Committee
c/o 95 Courtleigh Boulevard
Toronto, Ontario, M4R 1K7

For: Symbol Co-ordination Committee Newsletter
Series 2 (4 volumes) September 1975 to August 1976

I/We hereby apply for subscription(s) at \$3.00 each
(number)

My/Our cheque for \$..... is attached.

Name Ms Miss Mrs
Mr. Dr.
(please circle)

Area of Interest
(parent, teacher, O.T., etc)

Address

.....

.....

..... Postal Code

Cheques or money orders (no cash please) to be made payable to
"Symbol Co-ordination Committee."



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PENPALS WANTED

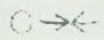
Victor-Dore School is a French school in Montreal for handicapped children between the ages of 6 and 18. Since December 1974, Bliss symbols have been taught to 20 severely involved students with cerebral palsy, the majority of these students being at the primary school level. Two little girls, Line Raymond (9 years old) and Marie-Claude Labrecque (7 years old) who have just received the 200 symbol board, are interested in corresponding with girls of the same age. Letters should be sent to:

c/o O.T., Department
Victor-Dore School
1350 est, Rue Cremazie,
Montreal, Quebec, H2E 1A1

From Line: 

   Line Raymond
  9
     8
   > Montreal  

From Marie-Claude

   Marie-Claude Labrecque
  7.    10+!
     7
   > Montreal  

From Gilles (A boy of 12 wishing to correspond with a girl of his age)

   Gilles Dufour
 12
     12  12
 

A CASE STUDY

Presently, I am engaged in a case study of the effectiveness of a highly structured method of symbol instruction. The subject of this study is a thirteen year old boy named Glenn. Glenn and I began work in January 1975 and will continue until June 1975. I have attempted to adapt a programme which follows the Developmental Sentence Types (Lee, Laura. Developmental Sentence Analysis, Northwestern University Press,) devised by Laura Lee at Northwestern University. The D.S.T. analysis contains 3 basic levels of development:

1. Single words (or symbols)
2. 2-word combinations (2 symbol combinations)
3. 3-word combinations (3 symbol combinations)

Due to the nature of the expressive output which results in symbol usage, I was able to extract developmental stages on gross levels only, disregarding the finer distinctions of structures such as the designatives, e.g. "here chair" and "verb + ing" constructions.

Glenn and I began working at the first stage of single symbol responses early in January. Glenn was required to learn the various structures selected for the programme according to a criterion measure which carried him through three stages:

- i) Direct imitation of a verbal model.

example: model - mother wash.

response:  

- ii) A response with minimal cues.

example: cue - mom is ____.

response:  

- iii) A response with no verbal cues.

example: Glenn looks at a picture.

response:  

My original design included a criterion measure of successful responses in 8 out of 10 trials; however, Glenn's inconsistent learning rate forced me to abandon this decision. His immediate short term memory is excellent but he requires constant daily drill to retain a concept over a long period of time. Even though we were unable to meet the set criterion, I am still working under the premise that spontaneous generalization is a rare phenomenon. In taking Glenn through the three steps outlined above, I am working towards spontaneous output from Glenn in postulating that a transfer of learning will occur from one stage to the next. Each preceding stage will add information and contribute to the learning of each succeeding level. By paralleling the training situations at each level of development to the desired symbol output in a spontaneous situation, I hope to accelerate the whole transfer process.

At this point in time, Glenn is consistently combining noun + verb, verb+noun, noun+noun, preposition +noun in structured situations. Glenn has been unable to generalize all of these concepts to his spontaneous conversation.

We are having a lot of fun working our way through the programme with many successes but also a few failures. We plan to continue until the end of June, at which time I'll let you know our final status and results!

Dale Sutherland
Speech and Language Pathologist
Ontario Crippled Children's Centre

RESPONSE TO COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS REGARDING
BLISSYMBOLICS AS A COMMUNICATION MEDIUM FOR
NON-SPEAKING PHYSICALLY-HANDICAPPED CHILDREN

BY: SHIRLEY McNAUGHTON, DIRECTOR
SYMBOL COMMUNICATIONS PROGRAMME
ONTARIO CRIPPLED CHILDREN'S CENTRE

STATEMENT ONE:

"Why not teach him to read instead?" If a child is bright enough to learn symbols, it would be better to devote attention to teaching him words which everyone else uses and thus spare the child the time and effort involved in learning two different systems.

RESPONSE ONE:

This argument is based on the following premises:

1. words and symbols are organized in the same way;
2. words and symbols require the same learning abilities;
3. communication facility utilizing each system can be acquired with an equal amount of effort and time;
4. words and symbols fulfil the same function.

However:

1. Written words are composed of visual elements (letters and groups of letters) which are related to sound. Blissymbols are composed of visual elements which are related to meaning -- sometimes directly through pictorial representation; sometimes indirectly through representing an idea related to the meaning; sometimes arbitrarily.
2. When the young child first learns words, he must remember an abstract visual configuration; any clue relating this configuration to other parts of the system are based on sound-shape relationships. When the young child first learns Blissymbols he ~~must~~ remember a pictorial representation which refers by its outline directly to the object it portrays.

3. Communication facility utilizing the word system is dependent upon skill in spelling - for which training and practice is required. Facility utilizing the Blissymbol system is dependent upon the ability to select the meaning elements (essential characteristics) required to transmit meaning - for which the abilities to classify and describe are required.
4. Both systems do indeed share the common function of providing a vehicle for communication; however, the degree of communication comprehensiveness of each system which can be acquired by the young child and the additional functions served by each system are different and should be recognized.
 - a. Words prepare the child for reading and typing (the physically-handicapped child's potential written output medium). Words also provide the child with a communication medium which can gradually expand as he masters a growing vocabulary.
 - b. Blissymbols equip the child with a complete communication system (accessible to the bright child within a four to fifteen month period). Blissymbols also provide the child with a medium which facilitates creative thinking, inductive processing and concept clarification. Utilization of the medium involves a conceptual framework which gives the child another perspective in viewing and relating to his world. Blissymbols provide experience in the processing of visual information and thus contribute to learning to read. Incidental experience with words is provided through the child's constant access to the words which appear under each symbol on his display.

In Summary:

Words provide early limited communication which gradually expands; they prepare for reading and typing. Blissymbols provide earlier comprehensive communication and contribute to creativity and cognitive development; they prepare for reading through experience with the process but not directly with the content of the written English system.

- - - - -

STATEMENT TWO:

"Words can do as much as symbols can do." If a child has 100 spaces which can be clearly indicated by him, he will be able to communicate as fully with 100 words in the spaces as he would so with 100 symbols occupying the spaces.

RESPONSE TWO:

This statement fails to recognize the communication potential arising from the structure of the Blissymbol System. Each symbol, whether it be a simple or compound symbol, represents a concept which can encompass a range of meanings and be translated by many words. e.g. The symbol for "building" can be interpreted as house, home, structure, hotel, garage, shack, palace, office, tent, etc., through utilizing information from the situational context or by responding to additional symbol clues.

Secondly, each symbol element can be combined and recombined with other elements to form new concepts.

One hundred symbols can lead to an infinite number of words - as many as the child's creative ability will allow. Only through the ability to spell could the word system provide the same communication potential. It can be argued that a broad meaning can also be taken from individual words and that symbols are not necessary. This can certainly be done by those skilled in relating with the children but it involves mis-using a system which is based upon precision and accuracy of word meaning. One feels that the child is using a rudimentary form of the word system (e.g. pidgin English); whereas with symbols, the child is creatively using a device which is an integral part of the system. The child is indicating a mastery of the symbol system which gains him recognition rather than utilizing an inferior form of the word system which tends to minimize his capabilities as perceived by others.

- - - - -

STATEMENT THREE:

"Symbols emphasize that the child is different and present a negative image to others."

RESPONSE THREE:

Our experience has been just the opposite. When open-minded new-comers meet symbol-using children for the first time, they are intrigued by the uniqueness of the children's communication mode. They are impressed with the children's ability to relate with others and to communicate unanticipated information. As they become aware of the children's ability to create new symbols and the manner in which the symbol output is integrated with gesture, early alphabet skills and vocalization, most persons become highly motivated to interact with the children and to learn enough about the symbols to communicate at a level which utilizes the many strategies inherent in the structure of the system.

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STATEMENT FOUR:

"Symbols restrict the number of persons with whom the children can communicate, for one must know the symbol system before one can understand the children's output."

RESPONSE FOUR:

Not true! One does not have to learn the symbol system in order to communicate with a symbol-using child. A WORD APPEARS UNDER EVERY SYMBOL on the child's display. Those persons who do not have the time or the desire to learn the symbols can communicate at the word level with every symbol-using child. Basic communication is possible with everyone.

- - - - -

STATEMENT FIVE:

"Blissymbols are best suited to serve as a communication medium for the mentally retarded child. The bright child should learn words." OR CONVERSELY "Blissymbols are too difficult for the mentally retarded child; only the child with average or above average intellectual ability should be introduced to the symbols."

RESPONSE FIVE:

There is need for exploration of symbol use by children at differing intellectual levels. The child's intellectual ability will determine the use he makes of the symbols. The child with limited mental ability will require a teaching approach suited to his needs and will limit his communication to basic needs and immediate situations. The brighter child can become involved with the organization and strategies of the system and can become proficient at communicating at various levels, dependent upon the symbol expertise of the person with whom he is communicating. Inherent in the Blissymbol system is a complex, comprehensive, creative communication potential, (the details of which are outlined in C. K. Bliss' text Semantography - Blissymbolics, Semantography-Blissymbolics Publications) which can serve the symbol-user into adulthood, should he wish to continue an involvement with the system!

- - - - -

STATEMENT SIX:

"Blissymbols are only useful as a bridge to reading."

RESPONSE SIX:

Blissymbols do provide an excellent preparation for learning to read (see response number 1). They are however, components of an independent communication medium and deserve recognition in this capacity. The symbol system, Blissymbolics, contain an organization and structure which makes it a valuable communication medium with potential application to a wide range of children and adults with communication difficulties.

- - - - -

SYMBOL COMMUNICATION ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

FROM WORKSHOP - APRIL 9-11th, 1975

At the end of the O.C.C.C. Symbol Communication Workshop held April 9-11, 1975, the participants were asked to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of symbol communication. The following is a summary of their assessments.

- - - - -

MAJOR STRENGTHS

Provides non-verbal communication,
with many strengths of speech

Encourages individual & social development
Affects self image
Encourages emotional development

Facilitates cognitive development
Abstraction, conceptualization,
judgment, logic, imagination
language

International application

Bridge to reading
syntax, grammar

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Flexibility

Applicable to various physically handicapped populations
" " " mental ages

Changes attitudes toward 'non-verbal' children

Reduces pressure for child
on vocalization
on general physical state

Permits varied use by individual
telegraphic
inflected
multiple meanings

It's working

Easy to learn
relation of symbols to concrete

MAJOR WEAKNESSES

Slowness of communication
requires great patience & time
by both "speaker" and "listener"

Lack of precision
subjective interpretation
susceptible to individual variation

Costly (in time & money)
Staff time: close attention to "speaker"
therefore may need extra staff
requires training, especially in
initial stages

Public need general education

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Difficulty of access (interface & equipment)
for severely handicapped

Awkward portability

May not be socially acceptable

Constant change during evolution

Structure not applicable to every language

Requires visual acuity

Syntax not well developed

No print out therefore child lacks independence

May inhibit richness of expressive language

Lack of research information

Submitted by Barbara Kates
Co-Director O.C.C.C. Symbol Programme
Evaluation Study

A REBUTTAL

- Ruth Harrington

The writer of last month's 'criticism' is entitled to his opinion and, in part, I respect his right to voice it. The fact that I am in complete disagreement is really of little consequence. However, the fact that he is a 'professional' in the field of linguistics and works with other special children is important for it tends to lend a credibility and importance to his remarks that, in my opinion, they do not deserve. He seems to know little about Cerebral Palsy (the condition which, at this point, most of our symbol users have) and not much more about the symbols themselves. As a professional, he has neglected his obligation to be fully and correctly informed before being so openly critical.

Admittedly, Bliss book is "tiresome" to study, but it does have great value for reference. Had our critical linguist given it more than a quick perusal, he would have learned that the symbol for woman, , is derived from the symbol for creation, . Whatever disparaging remarks he might like to make about women, he cannot deny that it is they who give birth to babies!

The argument here is not the individual symbols, however, but rather a symbol system vs. a system directly derived from the children's previous linguistic experience, - in his thinking, reading, writing or typing.

The communication boards bearing pictures and words are so obviously limited that they are useless as an on-going means of communication. (They are limited by the availability of space accessible to the child and the availability of suitable, definitive pictures. In addition - the selection of words offered to the child to 'talk' with is made, not by the child himself, but by another person).

Learning to read can be a very lengthy complicated process, particularly for a multi-handicapped child whose inability to speak is only one facet of a condition which prevents him from investigating and participating in his world. When lack of motor function prevents a child from exploring and handling even the mundane fixtures of his own home, how can he ever "quickly" accumulate the fund of experience, background knowledge and understanding of relationships, which he must carry into a reading program if he is to learn effectively. Even if a very bright C.P. child should learn to read at an early age, further skills must be developed before he could 'spell out' a message.

Whether or not he could ever write or type a message quickly enough to be useful, is a question which can only be answered on an individual basis.

While we have agreed that Bliss book is "tiresome", I must assert that the system of symbol communication is not. Nor is it "difficult" or "abstract". A little study of the symbols themselves and the way they are developed would reveal to any truly interested person the logic of the system. It is this logic which helps the children to learn the symbols quickly and to retain them for functional use; I could never over-emphasize the value of the teacher here. There are definite skills to be taught and when the initial symbols are presented in a meaningful way, there is a carry-over which helps the children to arrive at the meaning of a newly introduced symbol.

Having acquired a means of communicating, children can now broaden their world by actively participating in it, rather than passively looking on. They can ask their unique questions. Through careful guidance, some of the gaps in their development can be filled. Now the transition to an effective, meaningful reading program can be a natural and smooth one for many of the children. A careful program is being worked out by the S.C.R. Team to ensure this.

Far from being "alien and inadequate" as our critic put it, this symbol system which allows a child to combine symbols, to extend and manipulate them for new and different meanings, is a good one. If there is a possibility of natural speech developing, the use of symbols encourages such development. When a child is ready to learn to read, the skills acquired in learning symbols & their usage will facilitate this. There is an added bonus too! Through instruction in symbols, their components and how to combine them, the children learn to analyze feelings and objects in a special way, arriving at a far greater understanding of the meanings & uses of words than a non-symbol peer.

Obviously, I am a parent whose child has benefitted greatly from the symbol program. It is a 'different' way of talking - true - but it works. In a life filled with limitations and compromise, symbols have brought a success and self-confidence, we never thought would be possible.

Ruth Harrington,
Parent, Toronto.

A REBUTTAL

Shirley McNaughton

As I read the Critique of the utilization of Blissymbolics as a means of communication for the non-speaking child, (which appeared in Newsletter 4, February 1975) I felt an immediate empathy with Charles K. Bliss and recognized again the challenge faced by those who present any new idea prior to a widespread understanding and appreciation of the needs and background from which it emerged!

The Critique appears to have been written without careful study of Blissymbolics (the writer should look again at the derivation of woman and women's lib!) and with lack of appreciation for the special advantages of Blissymbolics for the physically-handicapped non-speaking child - advantages which arise from the organization and comprehensiveness of this meaning-based communication medium.

The major argument presented in the Critique seems to rest on the writer's desire for the non-speaking child to use the same communication mode as the speaking community - words. He appears to disregard the experience of many instructors that children are unable to learn and usefluently a large number of written words at a young age. The objective of utilizing a commonly accepted medium seems to override the child's learning strengths and his need to communicate early.

Those of us who teach Blissymbols as a means of communication did not come to this system without first trying words. A swift "learning to read" was not witnessed by us in our teaching experiences with physically-handicapped children. The severe experience limitations, the limited feedback possibilities, the child's inability to orally participate in the word communication medium, all contributed to a complex, time-demanding learning programme which required intense attention and energy to be directed to word learning not to involvement in communication.

We felt that it was up to us to adjust to what the child could learn quickly; not to force the child to "do without" until he could master our way of communicating. For us the early years were too precious to spend on word drill which resulted in very little accomplishment and extremely limited expressive communication possibilities.

The Critique appears to be based on a very different perspective regarding the interrelationship between the non-physically handicapped community and the physically handicapped child. The possibility of speaking persons maintaining a flexible position and adjusting to a new system in order to accomodate the special needs of the physically-handicapped non-speaking child seems to be ignored.

Blissymbolics offers young non-speaking children a system in which they can excel, in which they can show their unique strengths, in which they can be more proficient than we can! A vehicle for their creativeness becomes available to them. Blissymbolics is not contrary to their experience; in fact, it is quite the opposite. Children are able to relate the meaning represented visually by the symbol to their own understanding of their world and they remember what the symbol means. We may each disagree with some of the meanings expressed by Bliss through his symbols, but we do not forget them! And that's what counts. We remember and we are free to concentrate upon communicating not upon lengthy study of the components of the system. Is it too much to ask that speaking persons keep open minds and respond to what the children have to say in a medium in which they can become proficient? (Especially when the words always appear under the symbol!)

The deaf sign language, for many years, received opposition from the speaking community. The deaf themselves had to assert their need for a system built on their strengths. Now research is demonstrating that effectiveness in communication is not diminished by the uniqueness of the communication structure. (Belluzi, Ursula and Fischer, "A Comparison of Sign Language and Spoken Language" Cognition 1972, 2/3, 173-200)

I for one feel we must keep an open-mind to Blissymbolics and any new system which offers a communication capability to non-speaking physically-handicapped children. I have no doubt that if they have the ability, they will learn our communication system as they get older; I am quite willing to put effort into learning their system in order to help support their early interaction with their world and facilitate their development.

If one can move to the position of accepting the need for an alternate communication system for the non-speaking physically-handicapped child, then one is free to evaluate the appropriateness of Blissymbolics in this role.

A Formative Evaluation Study funded by the Ministry of Education is presently being undertaken by the Ontario Crippled Children's Centre to study the effectiveness of Blissymbolics as they are being used in 35 settings with 171 children. Upon completion of the study in August 1976 we will be in a position to objectively report on the results of teaching Blissymbolics to non-speaking physically-handicapped children. At that time, we will have gathered information regarding the communication, academic, social and psychological development of non-speaking children who use Blissymbolics as their substitute for or complement to speech. Only by examining these multi-facets of the children's growth will we be able to assess the effectiveness of Blissymbolics.

Our experiences to date, provide us with innumerable examples of the ease with which the symbols are learned and enable us to appreciate the structure of Blissymbolics which makes it worthy of consideration as a viable substitute for or supplement to speech. The range of meaning represented by each symbol (thus requiring a smaller number of symbols than words to provide the same communication potential), the direct representation of meaning portrayed by the simple configurations of the pictographic symbols, the combination capabilities of the Blissymbol elements, lead us to recommend Blissymbolics as a system worthy of serious consideration as an alternative communication medium for children deprived of early communication experiences due to a physical handicap.

We recognize the need for objective information which the completion of the Evaluation Study will make available, but in the interim we continue to observe directly the social, emotional and intellectual development of children who interact, via symbols, in the fascinating world around them. Their progress and development speak more convincingly than any Critique.

Shirley McNaughton, Director
Symbol Communication Research Project

P.S. I am submitting to the Newsletter an article containing my responses to the misconceptions re Blissymbolics which I encounter frequently! For his further consideration, I'd like to refer the writer of the Critique to this article.

BOOK REVIEW

Subnormality in the Seventies - #8
TONGUE TIED

by Joseph John Deacon
44 pages

National Society for Mentally
Handicapped Children. £1.00
London, England.

The phenomenal thing about this pamphlet is not the content, the size, nor the speed with which it was completed (fourteen months) but simply that it was written at all. Its author, "Joey" Deacon, is a severely handicapped, spastic Cerebral Palsied adult (involvement of the upper and lower extremities) who has spent the greater part of his life as a resident of St. Lawrence's Hospital, Caterham, Surrey. Despite this,

Joey has managed to write a most unusual and really, very touching story of his day to day existence and that of his friends.

It is important to emphasize that this story is as much about those loyal friends as it is about the author himself. A true mixture of handicapping conditions - mental retardation, severe spasticity, lack of mobility, etc. - each has filled in where the other has been deficient, to form a most unusual, and certainly very effective team. This co-operative effort became apparent fairly early on in the life of Joey, when Ernie Roberts came to live at St. Lawrence's. Up until this point, Joey, the most severely handicapped of the group, had had tremendous difficulty communicating even the most basic of his needs. Yet, from their first meeting, Ernie could readily understand what his friend was trying to convey - more than just his needs, rather, his reactions, his ideas, the full range of expressive communication. In this way, Ernie became Joey's voice, his own personalized oral communication system. In similar fashion, Joey's other dear friends, Michael and Tom, became his written communicator and his means of mobility respectively. As a unit, with the constant support of nurses, volunteers, administrators and interested, caring people, they produced Joey's story.

This pamphlet is concerned with communication between friends, between people on many different professional levels and intellectual levels, and between a man who has had much he has wanted to tell, and all the people he hopes will be listening. It is also a written record of painfully hard work, human involvement, friendship and respect. At last we have a personalized account that educates in the truest sense of the word, without the fancy trappings of multi-degree collaborators, impressively long bibliographical references, and well-known institutional backing. It is a pleasure to be able to share this publication with you.

Barbara Aronchick
Ontario Crippled Children's Centre

ATTENDING A SYMBOL COMMUNICATION WORKSHOP

A visit to the Ontario Crippled Children's Centre, the cradle of the application of the Bliss method, is a must for any serious student in the area. But a three-day workshop at the Centre with the participation of the leading figures in the field is truly a banquet of intellectual stimulation for novices and experienced professionals alike. I was fortunate to be involved in an intensive learning experience with 32 other people, representing various disciplines. Their home bases ranged from Newfoundland to Saskatchewan to Kalamazoo to Memphis. They represented many professions - school teachers, occupational therapists, physio-therapists, speech pathologists, etc. Since there were many small groups, there was ample opportunity to meet with others and share ideas.

The first day began with a welcome and introduction to all the people on the Research Team - names that are familiar but now take on new meaning. Shirley McNaughton - responsible for the birth of Bliss symbolics at O.C.C.C., ~~and~~ and now Project Supervisor, Barbara Kates - Psycho-educational Consultant, Ann Kennedy - Information Officer, Oliver Mott - Linguist, Dr. Geoff Iles - Rehabilitation Engineer, Dale Sutherland - Speech Pathologist, Marg Beesley - Occupational Therapist, and Mr. Maurice Izzard - School Principal. The present programme at the Ontario Crippled Children's Centre and its evaluation were then presented. The Bliss concept and overview of aims, the 100 and 200 vocabulary selections were explained and illustrated. The opportunity to view audio-visual material was available every day. Teaching procedures from the kindergarten level were presented using games geared to learning situations. We had lessons in symbol instruction, using our guide books. Assessments and factors determining the suitability of a symbol programme were outlined by the psychology and speech disciplines.

Day two began with more symbol instruction, symbol strategies and symbol syntax. The electronic equipment and interfacing were demonstrated and the abundance of different adaptations was exciting and a challenge to those of us who wish to try new methods. I was particularly intrigued by the possibility of the adaptation that is presently still being developed - the use of a light beam attached to glasses to point to an opaque symbol board. Each small group visited with individual children to see first hand the clinical application of the various methods in use at the Centre. The main highlight of Day Two was the integration of the symbol child into a normal school setting. A teacher with such experience was presented; as well, a family with a symbol child was interviewed in front of the participants, and this revealed the joy of communication. We had the opportunity to socialize at dinner, followed by the movie, "Mr. Symbol Man."

The final day took in more descriptions of the evaluation study. We ended the workshop with Shirley McNaughton in a lesson on how to make new symbols. A long-awaited publication of a handbook with a standardized vocabulary is forth-coming. While the whole workshop was exciting, stimulating and exhilarating, the ending was the most innovative and creative inasmuch as we invented our own symbols.

As a participant, I greatly enjoyed the workshop and enthusiastically recommend it to others. The only reservation being, that only the strong in spirit need apply for it is truly an exhausting three days.

O.C.C.C.

Alva Trossman
Hamilton

OCTOBER WORKSHOP

A workshop will be held for those individuals who are currently involved with symbol users (not appropriate for beginners.) This is the second annual workshop presented by the Symbol Co-ordination Committee.

Date: October 3rd, 1975

Time: 9.00 a.m. to 6.00 p.m.

Fee: \$7.00 (includes lunch and afternoon snack)

Place: Kitchener-Waterloo Rotary Centre

Registration: Forms will be mailed to all S.C.C. subscribers in August. Registration will be limited to 50.

Tentative Topics:

- Psychiatric Counselling through Symbols
- An Approach to Symbol Instruction
- Panel Discussion on Syntax
- Special Interests:
 - a) integration of single symbol user in classroom
 - b) Symbols with the retarded population
 - c) symbols with the pre-schooler
 - d) the adolescent symbol user

COMMITTEE VOLUNTEERS REQUIRED

The current Symbol Co-ordination Committee has been in effect for close to two years. To assure continuous functioning, three of the members will resign as of October 1975. Volunteers are required to fill the positions of:

Secretary

Treasurer

Workshop Convenor

Anyone interested in filling these positions is invited to write to the Committee before the end of June, 1975. New committee members will be selected by the present committee. The criteria for selection are:

- a) representation of various disciplines, parents, volunteers, on the committee
- b) representation of different centres of symbol users
- c) reasonable accessibility of various committee members

Those interested, please write to:

Ms. Penny Parnes
Symbol Co-ordination Committee
c/o Simcoe Hall Treatment Centre
387 Simcoe Street South
Oshawa, Ontario, L1H 4J2

NOTE: New committee members will be announced at the workshop on October 3rd, 1975.

NEWS FROM EDMONTON, ALBERTA

I first heard of the Bliss method in the famous Time Magazine article June 1972. Then there was the cover story in the Canadian Magazine. Last summer while passing through Toronto, I visited the Ontario Crippled Children's Centre and spoke briefly with Judy Seligman. She introduced me to your publication. My reason for being interested in Bliss symbols is that I am a volunteer consultant to a training centre for cerebral palsied children.

The Activity Centre for the Dependent Handicapped located at 11024-99 Avenue, Edmonton, came into existence in its present form in January, 1973. The Centre's present enrollment is 25 children ranging in age from the minimum of three years to fourteen years, the maximum age ~~being~~ accepted being sixteen years. The staff consists of 11 child care workers, a nurse who also serves as the child care co-ordinator, two teachers from the Edmonton Public School Board (one from Special Education and one from Early Childhood Education), a part time physiotherapist, and a secretary. The staff-child ratio is approximately 1:2 $\frac{1}{2}$.

Throughout the day, one child at a time is taken out of the large group for behaviour modification for about 20 minutes. Each child is involved in this programme once every three days. The type of behaviour modification programme currently being used at the Centre is primarily a precision teaching programme in that a system of rewards is used to teach a concept or task. The types of skills currently being taught consist mainly of the following:

- a) SPEECH - imitating motor tasks
 - imitating verbal tasks
 - imitating words
 - naming objects
 - naming pictures
- b) NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION - moving hand
 - placing hand on given area
 - placing hand on the Bliss symbols to indicate "yes" and "no" answers to questions.
- c) Following commands
- d) Self feeding
- e) Shape and object recognition
- f) Readiness activities

Currently there are two children who are receiving training with the Bliss "yes" and "no" symbols. Progress falters. The main problem being neither the teacher nor the children like the repetition of constant practice. More fun from the kid's point of view to stay dependent on others. We are using standard communication boards as well as a pedal operated wand. We built ~~xxx~~ the wand from the description in your magazine; ~~yp~~ your efforts are appreciated operationally. The pedals are about 10 cm square and are constructed so that pressing anywhere on the top of the pedal activates an electric step switch. The stepper controls the timing and size of the radial steps the wand makes. These variables can be adjusted to best suit the individual user.

May I ask if any of your readers are into Yerkish or Premackish, the symbol languages being developed with apes? The reason I ask is that my research focus is on the relationships between brain function and motor behaviour in monkeys and apes.

Dr. Charles Beck, Department of Psychology
University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta.

